HEALTHY URBAN FORESTS

An urban forest includes all of the trees and other vegetation in and around a city, village, or development. Maintaining a healthy urban forest requires a plan with strong implementation measures to ensure that the ecological, social, and economic benefits these forests provide are seen by the community into the future.

Some Reasons to Plan for a Healthy Urban Forest

• Ecologically, urban forests soften the impact of downpours by allowing water to recharge back into the earth and reduce runoff, flooding, and sedimentation.
• Socially, urban forests create a sense of community where people can recreate, socialize, or rest.
• Economically, urban forests provide the benefit of reduced energy costs because trees provide shade and cooler temperatures in the summer and insulation in the winter. Additionally, people tend to shop and linger more along tree-lined streets and prefer to live in scenic areas.
• With increases in development and urbanization, communities must meet the needs of residents by offering them green space for recreational, social, and aesthetic needs.
• Invasive species threaten urban forests and other vegetation in the community.

Tools to Address Healthy Urban Forests Across all Elements of Your Comprehensive Plan

• Create an urban forest management plan to include the benefits of urban trees, such as reducing storm water run-off, heating and cooling benefits, and serving as community gathering spots.
• Require contractors to mitigate any negative impacts to urban forests.
• Create incentives for private developers to preserve and expand the number of existing trees on their property.
• Require the use of native species in plantings and consider ways to control the spread of invasive species that can have negative ecological, economic, and social impacts to urban forests.
• Create or review existing tree ordinances and guidelines to ensure that they meet your community's goals for managing your urban forest and develop new ones as needed.
• Consider the concept of Green Infrastructure - strategically planned and locally managed networks of protected green space with multiple purposes.

For more planning tools go to the
Smart Forestry for Smart Growth Planner's Toolbox
on the web at
http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/land/forestry/SmartForestry